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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/31/2016

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SUBJECT: CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES UNABLE TO OBTAIN QUORUM

REF: PAP 1466

Classified By: Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) In the past three weeks, the chamber of deputies has found it difficult to obtain a quorum often enough to act on proposed legislation. President Preval on October 3 called an extraordinary session of the chamber of deputies to consider legislation on the structure of the judiciary, the number of Ministries, importation of genetically modified food, and the creation of an education partnership office (ONAPE), and a World Bank agreement following the closure of the ordinary session on September 12. Journalists speculate that some members do not appear in protest against the chamber's leadership (the executive bureau), led by chamber President Eric Jean Jacques (L'Espwa, Delmas) while others may simply not consider the legislation important enough to interrupt their vacations. The National Assembly (the combined senate and chamber of deputies) on October 23 gathered to vote on a road development program financed by the World Bank. The senate had sufficient members present, but the deputies lacked a quorum, causing friction between the two chambers.

12. (C) Deputy Steven Benoit (L'Espwa-Petionville) on October 27 stated that he was &fed up<sup>8</sup> with the Jean-Jacques' leadership of the chamber and reminded poloff that he always knew that morale would be a problem (reftel). Benoit accused the president of playing favorites within the chamber in order to maintain his support. Opportunities to represent the country abroad or participate in other fora are not open to all, but quietly given to &choice<sup>8</sup> deputies. Additionally, many of the daily operations are no longer transparent despite Benoit,s presence at parliament every day.

13. (C) Deputy Roland Lareche (FUSION-Capotille) in an October 31 discussion agreed with Benoit's assessment of the chamber,s leadership, saying that the majority of the executive bureau, consisting of five deputies from different political parties is &incompetent and arrogant.<sup>8</sup> He excluded the first secretary, Deputy Acklush Louis Jeune (OPL-Dame Marie) and the treasurer, Maxeau Balthazar (FUSION-Belle-Anse) from this characterization. Lareche also blamed President Preval for the difficulty in maintaining a quorum. "The President waited until we went on vacation to present laws. We were in session for 5 months, and no laws."

¶4. (C) Jean Jacques has a more difficult task than the president of the senate according to Gabriel Verrett, Preval's economic advisor. The chamber has 17 parties and no established majority coalition, making management of the house a challenge. Verrett noted that though chamber's executive board is comprised of 5 political parties it does not benefit from this broad representation under Jean Jacques' leadership. Verret believes that the president's strength, "wanting everyone to like him and get along" is also his weakness, as he does impose his will on the other members of the lower house.

¶4. Comment: Post has direct experience with the executive bureau's management weakness, as chamber leaders have missed several embassy appointments. The chamber leadership's poor performance stands in contrast to the relatively strong performance of the senate leadership under President Joseph Lambert. Whether or not the chamber can pull itself together to move on the legislation currently pending, it appears that widespread dissatisfaction among the deputies will lead to the election of new leadership at the beginning of the next regular session come January. End Comment.  
SANDERSON